

Cats & Dogs

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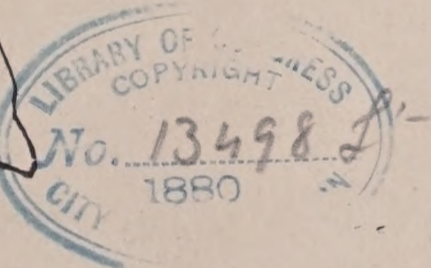
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Cats and Dogs.

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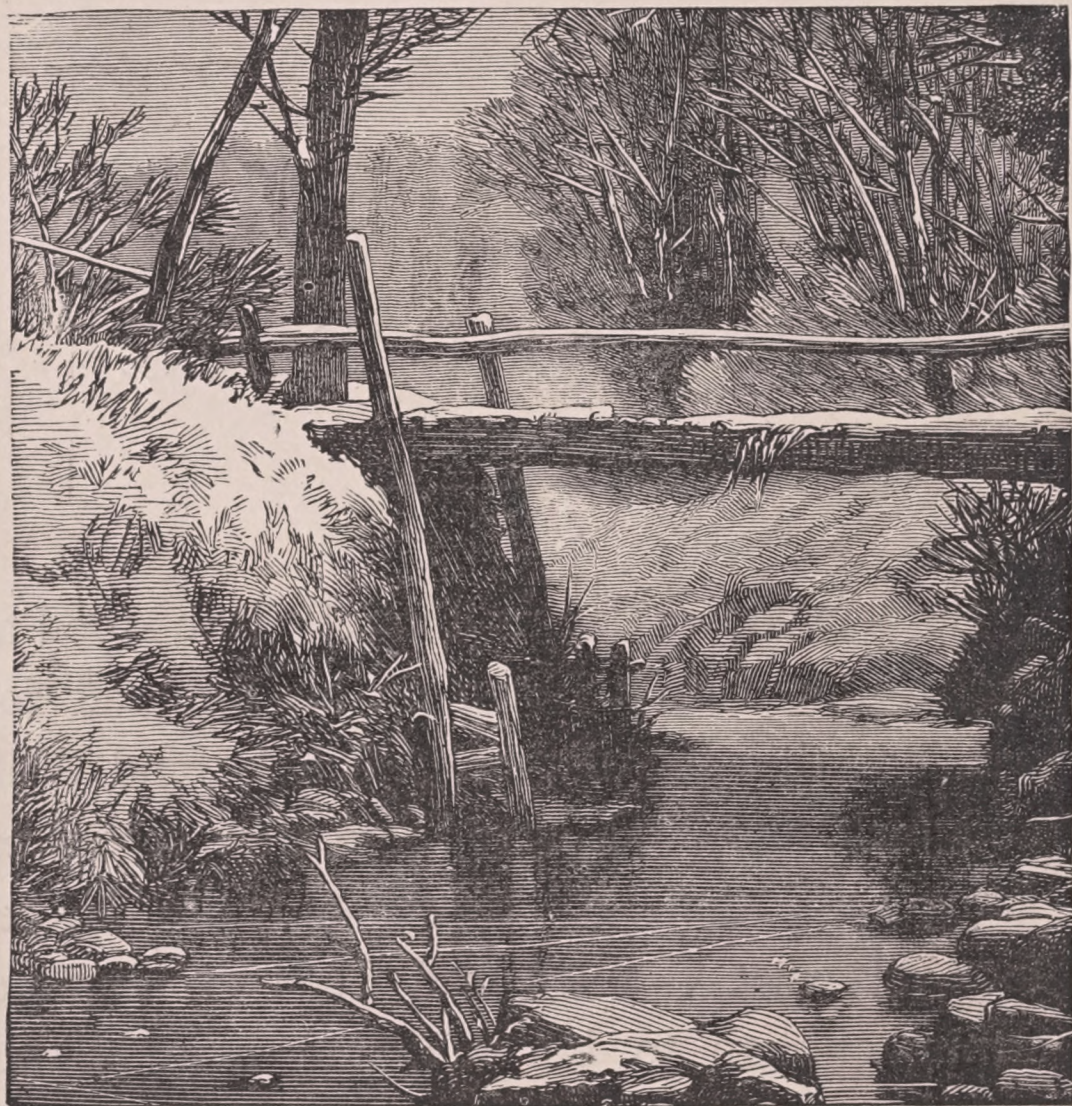
PRESS OF RICHARD HANDY,

CATS AND DOGS.

SUCH a snowy day as it was ! Rob stood at the window with a frown on his forehead, for was not this the day on which he, and Will, and Jack, and Ned, were to go after school to Long Lake skating. It was only the day before this that the ice had been pronounced strong enough to be safe, and here it was snowing as if it never meant to stop. It was too bad.

To be sure, Rob had been able to skate

nearly every day for a fortnight, but that was only on the meadow brook—a mere puddle, he



said, in comparison with Long Lake, where one could go three miles without a curve, where

they could find plenty of dead wood about the shores to build fires with.

But there seemed to be no help for it. The snow came down thicker than ever. It must have commenced soon after dark the night before, for it was now more than a foot deep.

“Well, there is one comfort anyway,” thought Master Rob, as he turned from the window. “I can’t go to school, and so I shall have a holiday. What shall I do? Shall I work with my tools, or shall I go out to the barn and see the dogs? I think I will go and see the dogs.”

Rob was a great dog-lover, and there was not a dog anywhere about that did not love him. Every friendless cur came to him at once and found a place in his heart. His father used to say that, if he could have had his way, he would have more dogs on the farm than all kinds of cattle put together. As it was, he had a good many.

First and foremost was Fleet, a great, shaggy Scotch deerhound, whom he had found sitting, thin and unhappy, outside the door one stormy winter's day.

He was a very different-looking dog now. His bones were all covered, and his unhappy days were over. Whenever Rob mounted his pony for a gallop, Fleet was ready to go with him, and many and many was the mile that they had raced along together.

But Fleet was the first of many, and they were all in the barn whither Rob was now going.

"I wonder where Grace is?" he said; "perhaps she'd like to go too."

He found Grace down on the floor in front of the kitchen fire, and extended to her the invitation to go with him. She was watching her cat drink a saucer of milk, and did not appear very enthusiastic at the idea.



“I’ve seen the dogs so many times, Rob, dear,” she said; “and it is so very stormy, that if you don’t mind, I think I won’t go.”

“All right,” said Rob; “the snow is pretty deep, and the paths are only partly made.”



“Would you mind taking pussy with you?” asked Grace. “I think she would like to catch a mouse for her breakfast.”

“Not a bit,” said Rob.



So pussy was put on his shoulder, and he set out. She seemed to be quite used to being carried in this way, and to find it much better than dragging through the snow; for she balanced herself very nicely as he plunged along through the drifts.

He was yet some distance away from the barn, when his friends within knew that he was coming, and a chorus of barks and whines arose. And when he opened the door he was the centre of a jumping and whining pack. There were only two old dogs besides Fleet, but there were puppies without number. Gyp, a Scotch colly, had six. They were not yet able to leap up and take care of themselves generally, so that in the hurly-burly that took place when Rob came in, they were stepped on a good deal, and there were several loud squeals of pain from them.

At this, their mother suddenly stopped fawn-



ing upon her master, and seizing them one at a time in her mouth, deposited them with a little shake in their box, as much as to say, "Stay at home, you small puppies; you are much too little to be out by yourselves." Then she settled herself in their midst, beating her tail with great violence on the floor whenever Rob looked her way.

When Gyp went back to her box the floor seemed quite clear. Two half-grown, pups however, still tumbled over and over one another at his feet. Rob did not waste any time over them, but taking down a stone mug that hung on a nail he walked around to where the cows stood in their stalls, went to one, and commenced to milk his mug full. Pussy meantime jumped off his shoulder on to the cow's back and stood there, purring, while he milked, apparently regarding the whole proceeding with great satisfaction.

The cow did not seem to mind having such a strange rider : no doubt pussy had been there before.

When Rob had filled the mug he held it up,



and the cat took a dainty sip or two. But the milk she had drunk in the kitchen seemed to have been all that she wanted, so she soon stopped. Just at that moment she caught sight

of a rat that was boldly smelling about in a distant corner, and, giving a flying leap, was after him like a dart. But Master Rat had seen his danger, and the last of his tail disappeared through a crack in the floor just as puss arrived at the spot.

“That was a pretty close shave for you, old Rat,” said Rob, and he picked up the mug which he had laid down to watch the performance, and going around where he had left the two pups, poured some of the milk into a saucer for them.

Then he went on to see the last litter of all. The mother was a little Scotch terrier, and her three little puppies were coiled up in a basket of straw beside her. She had not rushed with the others to greet Rob when he first came in, for she had never had puppies before and did not care to leave them for a single minute. She had whined, and barked, and wagged her



little tail with all her might, but leave her puppies she could not.

Rob went over to her and took up one of the little fellows in his arms. Saucy—for that was the terrier's name—looked on very anxiously. She did not know what might be going to befall one of her precious children.

By-and-by Rob grew tired of the dogs. So then he strolled over to where John, the hired man, was busy at the hay-cutter. John was not in a pleasant mood this morning, and so Rob, finding the barn grow a little tedious, decided to go back to the house. The snow was still coming down as fast as ever, so he went to the kitchen door and stamped and shook himself clear. Then he opened the door and went in. A bright fire was filling the whole chimney-place with its red glow.

He stopped in front of it for a minute to get warm. Then turning to the old house-keeper,

who sat on one side of it, he asked if she knew where Grace was.



“ I think she is in the library,” said the house-keeper.

So Rob went on to the library, and there he found Grace reading.

“Let’s have some kind of a game,” he suggested.



Grace was in the midst of a most delightful fairy tale.

“Wait until I finish this, Rob dear,” she said. “It is only forty pages.”

“Forty pages !” said Rob ; “ why, it will take you an hour !”

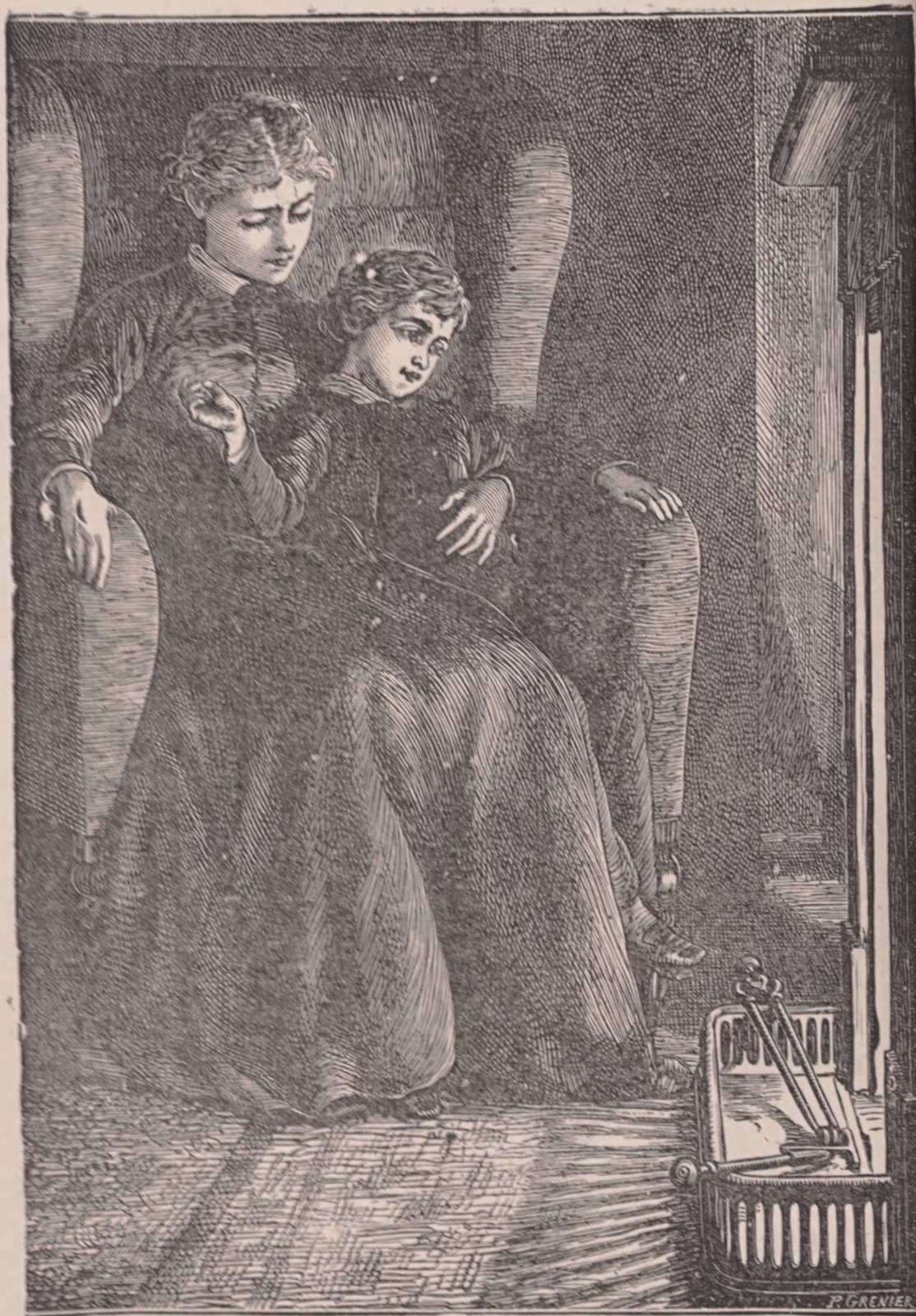
He went out of the room, and I am afraid banged the door just a little behind him. I’ll find mamma, he thought.

Mamma was easily found. She was sitting in a great high-backed chair in front of the fire with her lap full of stockings, whose holes she was darning. Rob pushed them all out of her lap on to the floor, and climbed up in their place. “Do tell me a story, or something mamma,” he said.

“What shall it be about ?” asked his mamma.

“Dogs, I think,” said Rob, after considering a little.

“Did you know,” said his mamma, “that



dogs were sometimes used instead of horses?
Away to the north, where the snow lies deep



nearly all the year, horses could never make
their way. There are no roads, and even if
there were, they would be so blocked with

snow that no one could find them. So dogs are used. They are a different breed from any hereabout. Their long thick coat, which keeps them so warm in the cold winter nights, would be a dreadful burden in our hot summer.

“These dogs are taught to haul in harness, and they are very tough and strong, and can go far further and more quickly than any horse. They are hitched to a sled, of course, in single file.

“The sled is made of a long board, turned up at one end for a sort of dash-board. Then, wrapped up in his thick fur rugs, the driver takes his seat on it, cracks his whip, and away they go.

“Sometimes, though, they do not get away so easily, for some cross dog refuses to have his harness put on, and has to be beaten thoroughly before he will submit.

“At times, long trains of dog-sledges loaded

with provisions set out for some far-distant fort. At such times as these the drivers do



not ride, but run alongside on snow-shoes. They go at great speed on these, and easily keep up with the dogs.

“Before daylight they start out. At noon a halt is made for an hour, and the men take a scanty lunch; then they set off again. The twilight comes early in those northern lands,



and as soon as it is too dark to see clearly they halt for the night. The dogs are loosed from



their harness and stand around looking on with great interest ; for now they are to have the

only meal they are allowed in the whole day. Two pounds of dried fish are given to each. It takes them only an instant to swallow it down. Then they walk about a little, hoping, perhaps, that there may be an unnoticed piece somewhere, or growling at one another, and settling any little disputes that may have arisen during the day. But soon they coil themselves up into a bunch and are fast asleep.

“The men meanwhile have been busily at work. One has cut down a tree for wood for a fire ; another with his snow-shoe has scraped away the snow, so as to leave a large round place, in the centre of which the fire is made. Then the supper is cooked. After this is over, the men smoke their pipes and tell stories ; but before long they wrap themselves up in their robes, and with their feet to the fire go off to sleep.”

“What fun that must be,” said Rob. “I

would like to drive a dog-team ever so much.
How jolly to go sliding over the snow !”



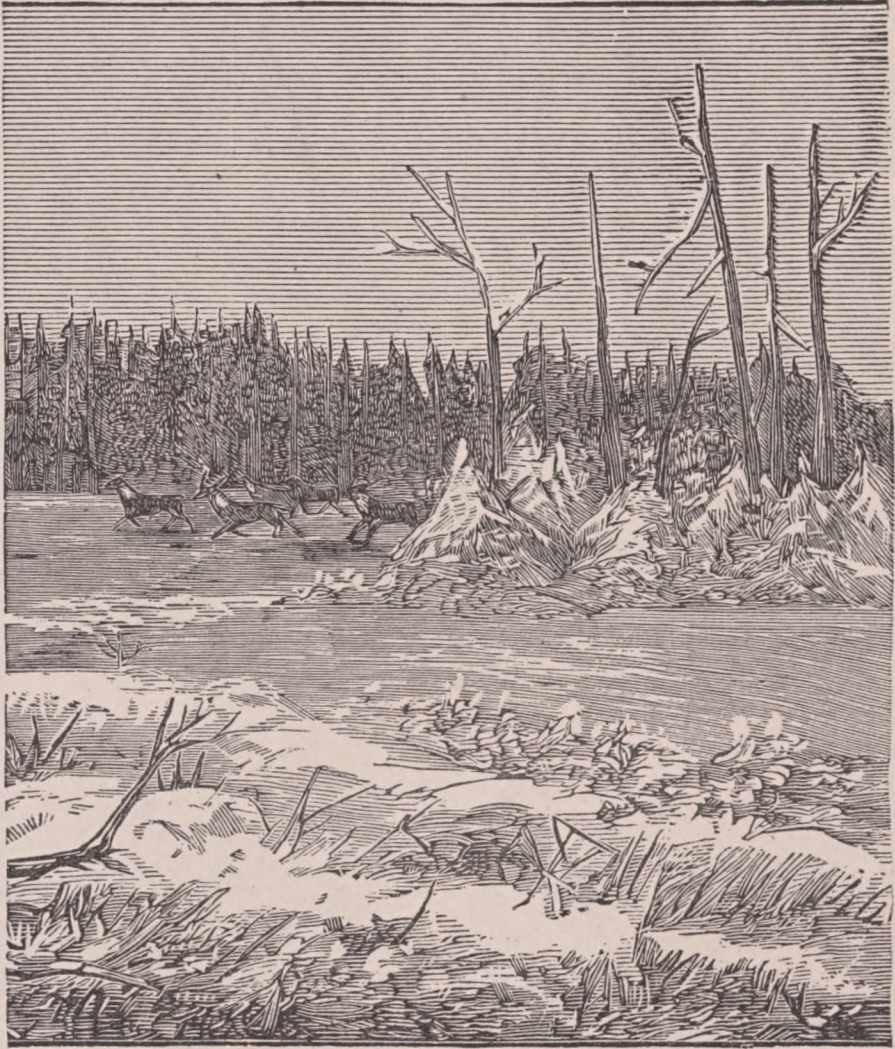
“It is not such good fun as you might think,” said his mamma ; “for one sits on the very bottom of the sled, and if it goes over any

ice-hummocks every jar shakes you, till you feel before night that every bone in your body will drop to pieces. Sometimes, too, the dogs give great trouble. They find out at once whether the person who is driving them knows his business, and if he does not, woe betide him.

“Perhaps while he thinks all is going on beautifully, they come suddenly upon some game. The startled deer raise their heads in astonishment for a moment, and then dash away. The sight is too much for the dogs. With barks and howls they dash away after them. In vain does the driver ply his whip. The dogs know that he is a green hand, and on they rush. The deer fly like the wind across the open glades and through the woods, and after them come the dogs.

“At last they come too near the edge of some hill. The sled loses its balance and slips, and away they go, dogs, men, and sledge,





all head over heels, and bring up in some snow-bank at its foot."

"I wonder how the Esquimaux and their dogs keep warm in the fearful winters they

have?" said Rob, as he looked at the blazing fire before him.

"The men and women are pretty thoroughly



clothed in furs," said his mamma, "and the



dogs, as you know, carry their own furs. Besides their houses are very warm, for they are

built of ice, and the dogs, I fancy, share them with their masters."

"But I should think a house built of ice would be very cold," said Rob.

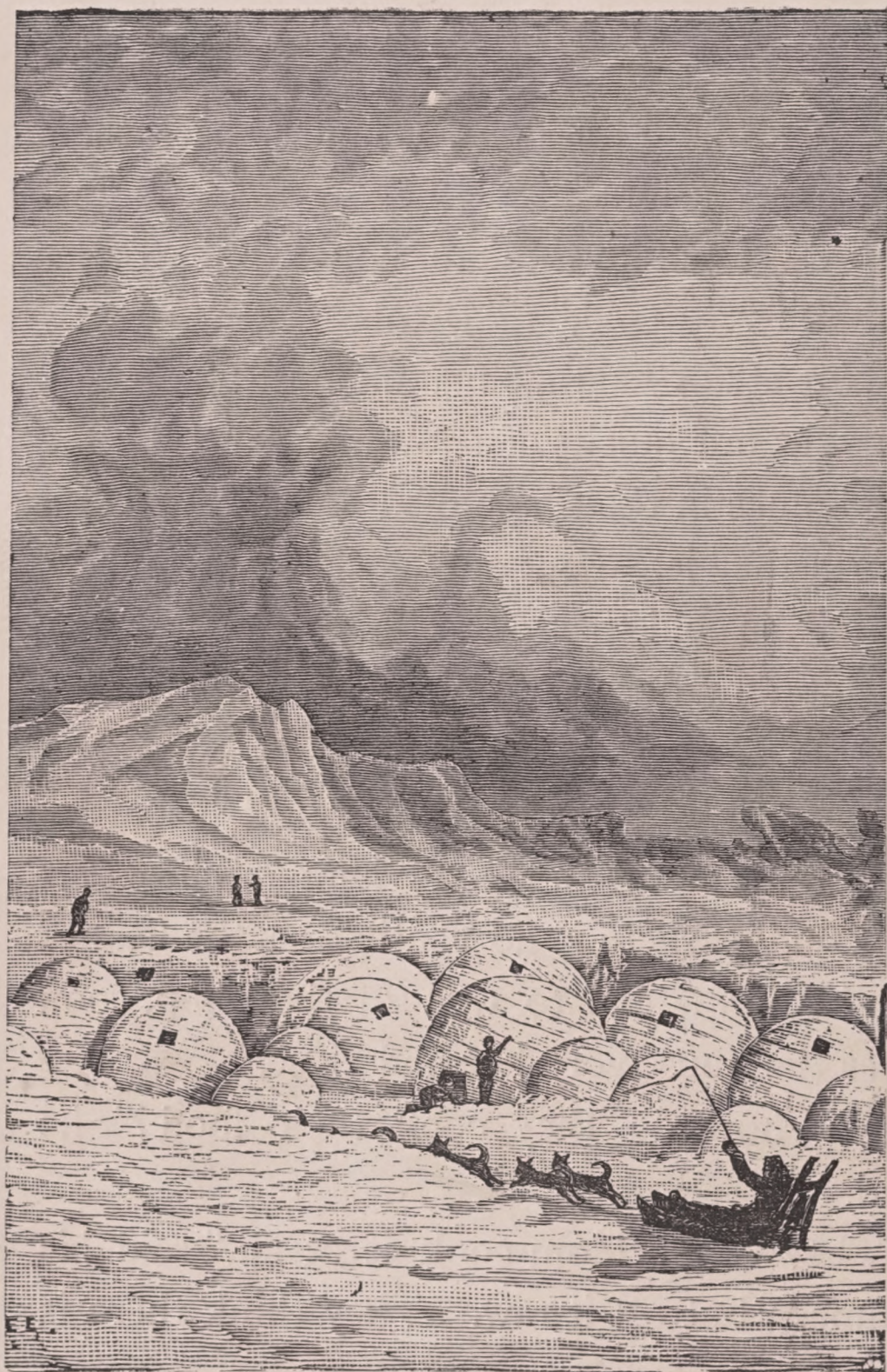
"Not at all," said his mamma. "The Esquimaux cut out blocks of snow and ice and build their homes in the shape of a dome. When it is warm they leave out one block for a window, but if it be cold they close it up."

"But how does the smoke get out?" asked Rob.

"There is not much smoke," said his mamma; "for they use a sort of lamp to heat the room, and as there is no ventilation, the heat of their bodies, added to that of the lamp, soon makes the house very hot and close."

"But how do they cook their food?" he asked.

"They very seldom cook it at all," said his mamma, "but eat it raw. They think there is



nothing so delicious as a piece of raw blubber. If a whale is thrown up on the beach by any



chance they fall upon it with their knives, and eat without waiting for any cooking. Then

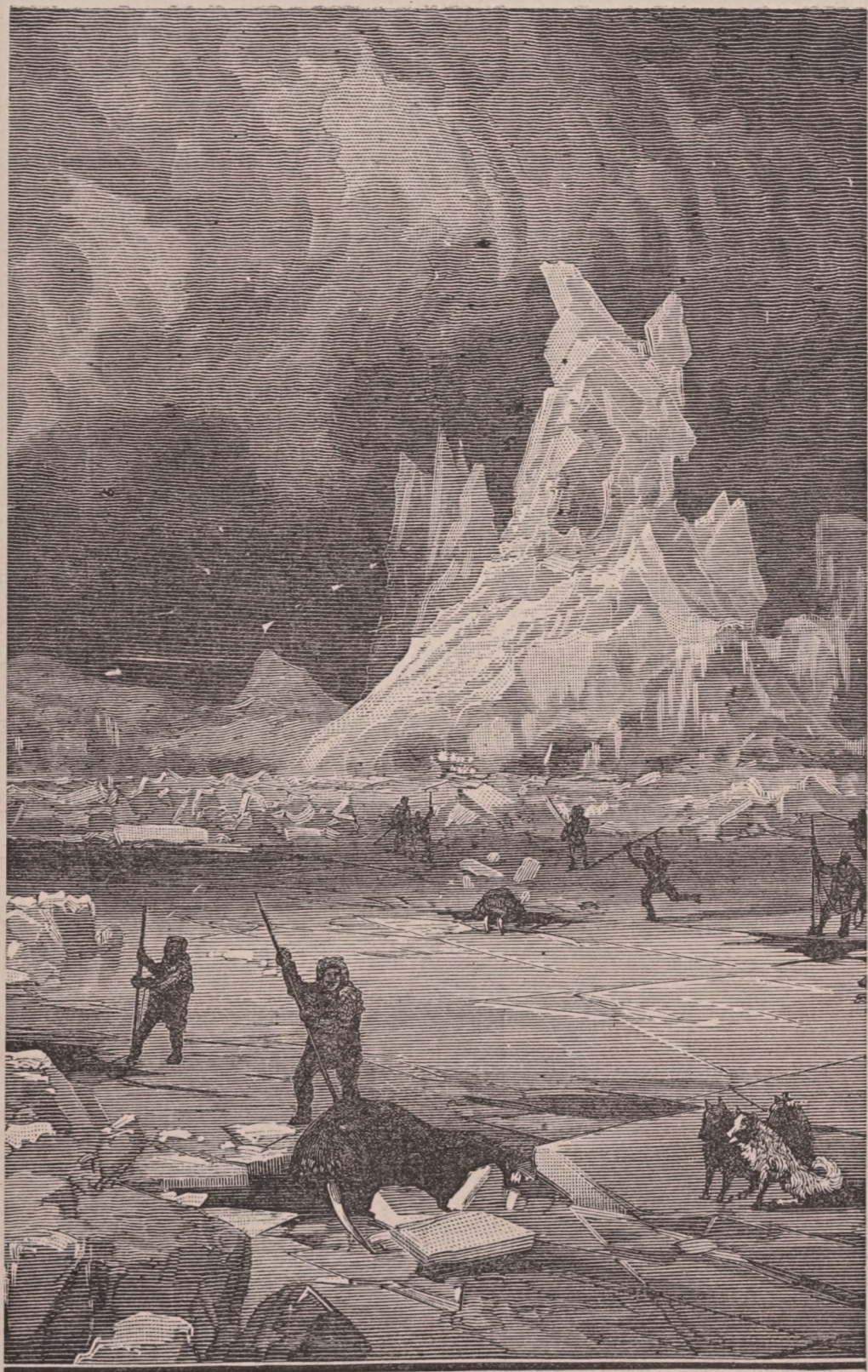
they cut off what they can and carry it back to their houses.

“The dogs are always on hand at such times, for in those far-away lands food is not plenty, and the poor beasts often fare scantily.

“Often the men go to hunt walrus. They make their way out on some frozen bay, until they find a hole in the ice which one of these animals has made in order to come to the top to breathe. Each man has a long spear in his hand, and stands motionless with it ready to strike the moment the walrus comes to the surface. Pretty soon he comes, down falls the spear, and they dine that day on walrus.”

“Well, for my part,” said Rob, “I am glad that I am neither an Esquimaux nor an Esquimaux dog.”

“For my part,” said Grace, who had come in, and had heard the latter part of what her mamma had been saying, “I prefer cats to dogs.”



“Cats are all very well,” said Rob very



sagely ; “but I fear that most of them deserve the fate of Mother Tabbyskins.”

“Who in the world was Mother Tabbyskins?” asked Grace.

“Did you never hear of her?” said Rob. “It’s a piece of poetry, and quite long, but this is the story: Mother Tabbyskins was an old cat, and a very wicked one. She used to spend her time in teaching kittens to spit and swear, which, of course, was very bad.

“One day she felt very ill, and said she was near her end. She got into bed and begged them to send for a doctor. So Doctor Mouse was called in; but Tabby no sooner saw who her doctor was than she recovered at once and swallowed him at a gulp.

“Very soon after she was taken ill again, and wanted a doctor called as before. This time Doctor Dog came. When Tabby saw him she was seized with fear, and she had good cause to be, for he ate her up in no time, just as she had done Dr. Mouse.”

“Oh, pshaw!” said Grace; “that’s just a



make-believe story. No real cats do such things as teach kittens to swear. Why, when



my pussy has young ones they are as well behaved as can be. Often I have seen her box their ears when they didn't do as she wished."

"Yes," said Rob, "but cats never do the clever things that dogs do. There are lots of stories telling of how they have saved their masters' lives. When some sudden snow-storm has come on the moors, and persons have lost their way, and, overcome by the cold, have lain down to die, their dogs have made their way to some house, and showing by their actions that their friends were in trouble, have brought them help. And only a day or two ago, papa read us out of the paper how a dog caught a burglar. The thief was a fast runner and was getting away from the policeman who was chasing him, when, all at once, a big Newfoundland rushed out from a brewery, and seizing the thief, knocked him down, and stood



growling over him until the policeman came up and seized him."

"Well, cats sometimes do clever things,"

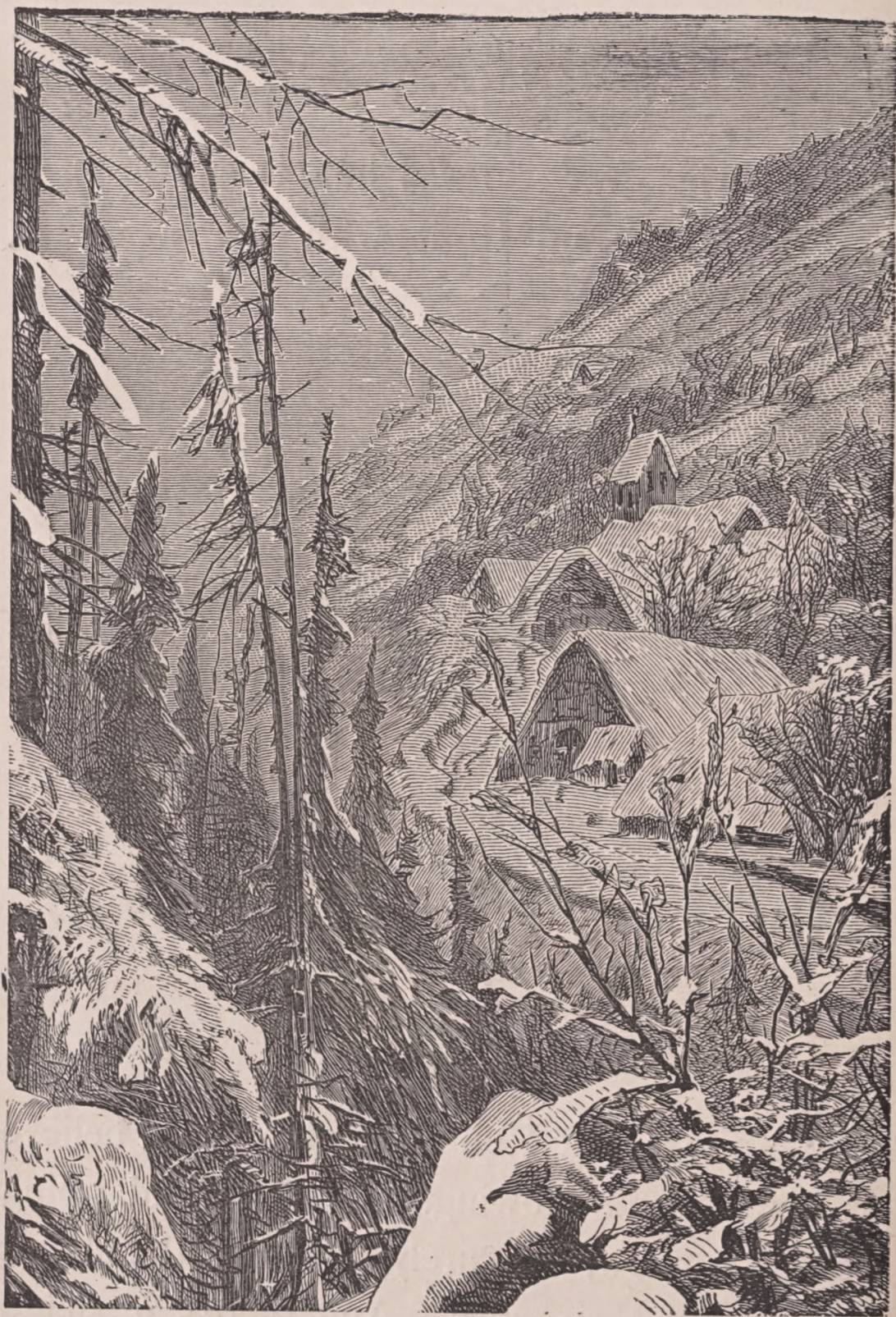


said Grace. "I know of a cat who lived on a farm. She was always fed at noon. To call the men to dinner they used to ring a great bell. Pussy found that this bell meant dinner,

and so whenever she was hungry she used to go and reach up to it with her paw and ring it."



“Hollo!” said Rob suddenly, “I do believe it has stopped snowing. Yes,” he said, going to the window, “it surely has; but the clouds are darker than ever. And there’s a sleigh



with a man in it stopped at our door. I'm going out to see what he wants."

So saying he ran out of the room, and seizing his hat from a peg in the hall crammed it on his head, and opening the front door ran out on the porch. When he was there he saw that the man in the sleigh was the doctor's man.

"Are the roads bad?" he asked.

"Yes," said the man; "we had to walk all the way. But when we left the village they were just getting out the teams to break roads."

"Where is the doctor?" asked Rob.

"In the house, talking with your father," said the man.

Very soon the two gentlemen came out, and the doctor got into the sleigh and drove slowly on, while Rob's father went back in-doors to work at his sermon for Sunday.

How white everything looked! The trees were bent down under their load, and on the long hill the houses seemed to be half buried. The clouds were beginning to break away in the west. The storm was without doubt over. Rob stood on the porch undecided what to do. On the hill he could see gangs of men with teams of oxen and heavy sleds breaking the roads. It would have been good fun to have been with them, but it was pretty cold work standing still and watching from a distance; and he was just about to go in when he saw John come out of the barn, leading the two horses, each with his harness on.

“Where are you going, John?” he called.

“To the woods for a load of wood,” called back John, who seemed to have recovered his good temper, and to be in a jolly state of mind. “You can come and drive, if you want to.”



Nothing could have been more to Rob's mind than this, so dashing into the house for his coat and gloves, he ran and clambered up on to the sled, gathering up the reins ready to start.

In a moment they were off, the horses stepping along briskly, though the snow was deep.

Presently they left the highway and turned through a pair of bars into a large piece of woods. The snow had not drifted here at all, but lay evenly, covering up all the dead leaves and giving little white trimmings to all the tender shoots that raised their heads through it. They stopped before a great pile of logs, and the man, pushing off the snow with his foot, began to load them on the sled.

"Hello!" said Rob, just as the last log was in its place, "there goes a rabbit. I wish I could catch him."



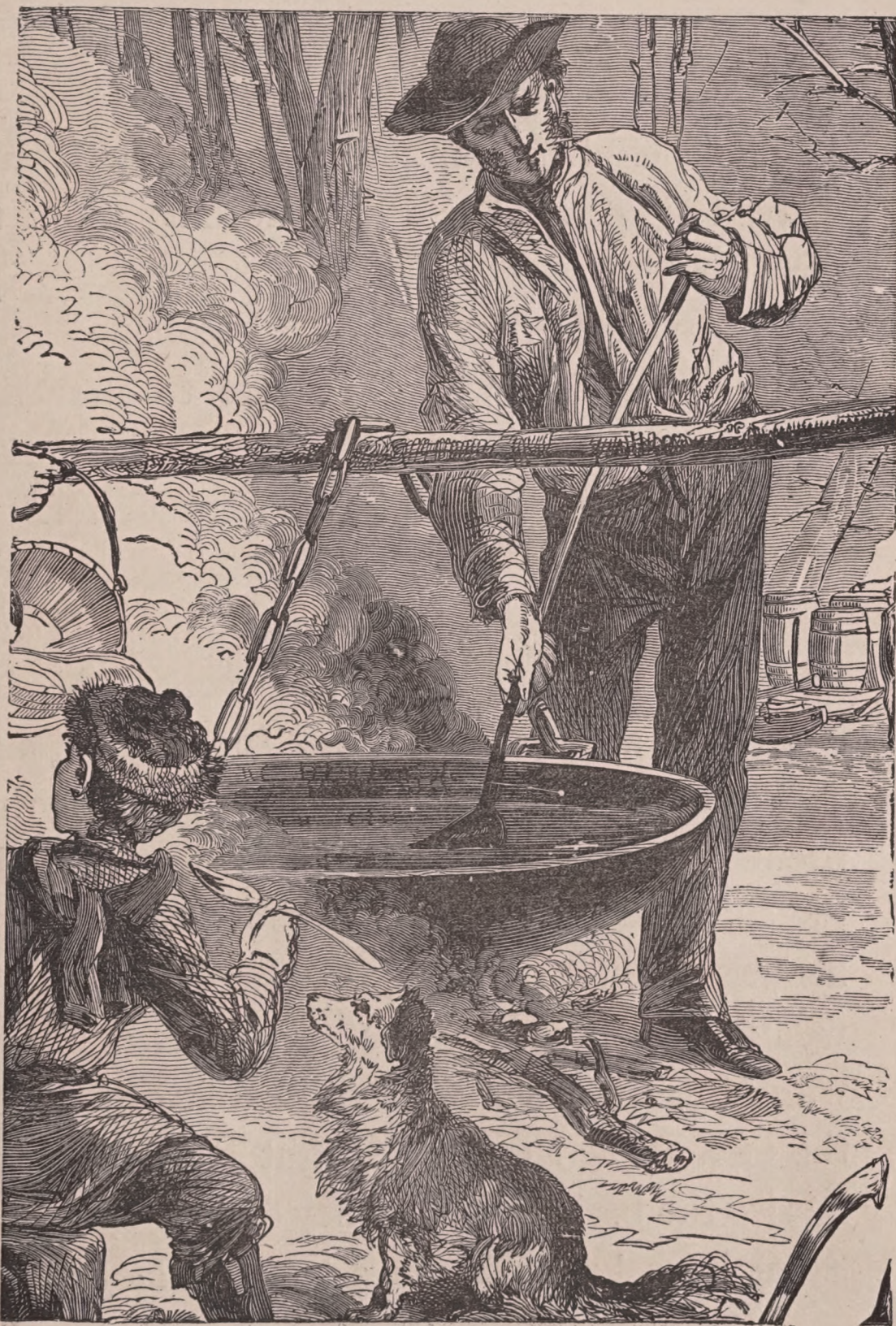
“ I caught many a one, and birds besides, when I was a lad,” said John.

“ How ?” asked Rob.

“ In traps,” said the man. “ I had traps all through the wood, I and another lad. We made quite a little money one winter selling the game we caught. A time like this would be fine for catching rabbits. All their food is covered up, you see, and they would be so glad to see a nice little sweet apple that they would never stop to see whether there was a trap near it or not.”

“ What fun it must have been !” said Rob.

“ Yes,” said the man ; “ but there was a vast deal of walking to be done. Some mornings I tramped nearly ten miles. In the spring, though, we got rather tired of trapping. It was much more fun then to go with the men sugaring. That was prime. They built a log hut, for sometimes they had to stay all night.



We boys used to think that if we could only stay all night we should have nothing more to wish for."

"Did you ever do it?" asked Rob.

"Oh, yes; but we didn't care to after the first time, for the bunks were very hard, and we liked a comfortable bed at home better."

"I was reading a book the other day," said Rob, "and it told about bird-catching in the far North. It must be exciting work. A man sits across a stick on which a rope is tied, and then is lowered over the edge of a cliff by his friends on top. Sometimes he swings there in the air a thousand feet clear above the sea. If his head should get dizzy and he should fall, it would be the end of him. He has a basket with him, and when he has filled it with eggs the men above let down a light cord, to which he ties the basket, and so they draw it up again. Sometimes he lands on a narrow ledge, and



with a net on a long pole captures the sea-birds that fly past. That must be exciting enough."

"Yes," said the man; "but here we are at home, and there is your mamma calling you."



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